DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 862 EA 018 402

AUTHOR Gibson, Amy R.
TITLE Student Recruitment.
INSTITUTION National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 45p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, National Catholic Educational Association, 1077 30th Street, N.W., Suite 100, Washington, DC 20007-3852 ($5.65 prepaid).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Catholic Schools; Elementary Secondary Education; Institutional Advancement; Organizational Communication; Public Relations; School Community Relationship; School Publications; *Student Recruitment; Student School Relationship

ABSTRACT

A practical process for developing or improving student recruitment programs for Catholic schools is presented in this handbook. Planning for and preparing the recruitment program is discussed in the first half of the document. The booklet reviews the process of assessing the school, its program, and its image; identifying the financial, material, and human resources available to support recruitment efforts; and evaluating the audience for the recruitment effort in terms of its needs and expectations. The booklet then suggests methods for generating recruitment strategies appropriate for the needs identified. The section concludes with a review of the role of the Director of Admissions, an appreciation of the value of the "Thank You," and a comment on the importance of having a written plan. The second half of the booklet discusses methods for presenting the student recruitment program, including using brochures and other printed materials, audiovisual presentations, using the mass media, welcoming school visitors, making recruiting trips to other schools, holding open houses, and establishing connections with feeder schools, parents, and parishes. Keeping adequate records and evaluating the recruitment effort are also covered. Appendixes advise on countering negative images and using students in recruitment efforts. (PGD)

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Student Recruitment

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Student Recruitment

by Amy R. Gibson

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About the Author

Amy R. Gibson has been involved in admissions and recruitment for the past nine years at Mercy High School in Baltimore, MD. Her experiences in the field include yearly visits to over thirty elementary schools, the coordination of numerous in-house recruitment activities and the writing, editing and design of the school's recruitment literature and graphic ads. Director of Admissions from 1980 to 1985, she recently was appointed to the position of Director of Development and Public Relations. Ms. Gibson's additional duties at Mercy are teaching English and Latin, coordinating the performing arts program, moderating the film club and directing the Mentor Program, an independent study course in career development.

Ms. Gibson holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Music from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland and a Masters in Educational Administration from Loyola College in Baltimore. Her previous teaching posts were with two Catholic elementary schools, St. Mary's in Bryantown, MD., and St. Mary's in Baltimore. Ms. Gibson has served as consultant to Maryland Public Broadcasting for an educational program on Southern Maryland and has published several articles in *Maryland Magazine*.

Foreword

Development, as promoted by the NCEA, is not only the attraction of more funds to an institution or program. Development is a process which calls the institution and all of its members to public accountability for the goals and purposes of the institution's existence. In the case of educational programs development focuses on the recruitment and retention of students. The best programs, in schools or parishes, have no impact unless they attract the type of active students for which they were designed.

Recruitment and retention are not unmentionable words in Catholic circles. They are words which in more religious circles can be called evangelization. This "how to" book details the process by which students can be recruited and retained in Catholic educational programs. Recruitment will demand a price of time, energy and financial resources. However, once we have built substantial educational programs they deserve worthwhile recruitment techniques.

Ms. Amy Gibson joins our series of "how to" authors with much expertise in the area about which she writes. All of us who will use this book thank her for a work which shows her dedication to Catholic education.

Reverend Robert J. Yeager
Vice President/Development
March 12, 1986

Acknowledgements

As an English teacher and devotee of fine writing, I feel I must apologize for the contemporary quality of my prose. In an effort to find the right informal, practical style, I have dangled a few modifiers and "creatively arranged" a sentence or two. Lest my eighth grade English teacher descend upon me with her red pen, I affirm that I did it on purpose, in the good graces of Tom Wolfe and other harbingers of the decadent future.

The experiences that I have had as Director of Admissions and school recruiter were under the direction of Sister Carol E. Wheeler, RSM, Principal at Mercy High School, Baltimore, since 1977, and Sister Angela Marie Ebberwein, RSM, Mercy's Assistant Principal for five years and now the provincial administrator of the Sisters of Mercy, Province of Baltimore. Our success at Mercy has been due in large part to their good heads, kind hearts and hard work in planning a cohesive and philosophically sound recruitment program.

Special thanks go to Sister Carol E. Wheeler, Kevin Whitehead and my husband, Joe E. Compton for assisting with the preparation of this manuscript, and to Dr. Joseph Proccacini of Loyola College, Baltimore for sharing the results of his research on Catholic schools.

—Amy R. Gibson

Student Recruitment

Amy R. Gibson

Introduction

Student recruitment is a new concept for most Catholic institutions. Previously supported by burgeoning enrollments and nominal tuitions, Catholic schools are now faced with the dual crises of other educational groups, public schools included: fluctuating enrollments and spiraling costs.

Recruitment, however, need not be viewed as an unpleasant necessity. It can be a healthy process that reveals a school's strengths, bolsters student and faculty pride, and fosters a sense of cooperation and colleagueship among schools within a community. Competitiveness should not be the watchword of recruitment. Good sense says that the success of one school helps all schools. Student recruitment at its best presupposes meeting the needs of the individual student as well as those of the school in an arena of positive and helpful association with neighboring educational institutions.

The whole point of student recruiting centers on the word *need*—the need of a student to find a school that will develop his or her academic and personal potential and the need of the school to replenish its ranks with students who respond to the kind of institution it chooses to be. The task, then, for any school or religious education program is to portray its institution as sincerely as possible. The chaos and unhappiness that result from false expectations create negative public relations that may take years to rectify.

Student recruitment must be viewed within a framework of overall public relations, one that includes the internal community of faculty, students, parents and alumnae, and the outside audience of potential students and parents. The overlap of PR techniques is considerable, and it is next to impossible to achieve a fully developed recruitment program, including

brochures, A/V aids and advertising, without the context that public relations can provide. Recruitment and public relations' sophisticates have no difficulty placing recruitment within a total school marketing plan. This business terminology may frighten some, but the concept is the same, discovering a need and supplying a product. It is to be hoped that Catholic schools can seize the best from our high tech world and put it to work within the traditional framework of Christian values and practices.

This handbook is a manual of basic steps designed to produce a quality recruitment program which meets the goals of a particular institution. It is written so as to be easily understood by those administrators just beginning to look at recruitment; however, some of its ideas will be useful to schools already engaged in formal programs.

The aim of this publication is to assist elementary and secondary schools as well as religious education programs. An effort has been made to provide relevant examples for all three areas. The two main sections of the handbook, "Preparing a Recruitment Program" and "Presenting a Recruitment Program" present an organized plan of action which can be effected over a twelve month period. It is important to recognize that recruitment cannot be conducted within a vacuum. It must cheerfully acknowledge and involve the entire school community. It requires time, energy, creativity and patience. It is best not to rush into such a venture. The more time given to planning, the more successful a recruitment campaign promises to be in practice and results.

Pooling of Resources

Catholic schools are fortunate in being professionally connected through each diocese's Division of Schools and Office of Religious Education. Some thought should be given to a collective effort of schools or religious education programs within a geographic area. The "Preparation" process would be handled within each school with the pooling of findings. The resulting written plan would encompass group goals and recruitment strategies, such as a combined advertising campaign and a shared open house date.

The obvious advantage is that the outlay of money and time for the institutions involved would be greatly reduced. The project might even be coordinated through the diocesan of-

fice. While this handbook does not speak specifically to a group, the steps toward the building of a school's or religious education program's recruitment plan can easily be interpreted for a collaborative effort.

Preparing A Recruitment Program

Preparation, an ongoing process in any successful recruitment program, should pinpoint a school's strengths and weaknesses. It should provide a necessary focus to deal with both the allocation of time and money and the demands of public scrutiny. Just how many recruitment tools are close at hand will also be revealed through preparation.

The major steps covered in this section begin with three formally conducted assessments—of the school, its resources and its audience—designed to involve every group associated with the institution and the community it serves. "Generating Strategies" allows for continued involvement of students, faculty, parents and alumni/ae in discovering creative ideas to achieve a school's goals. The decision as to who will do all of the work generated by careful planning is discussed in "The Director of Admissions." The preparation stage also includes the acknowledgement of an important public relations' mainstay, the thank you. Finally, the written plan eventually developed, results from the sifting and ordering of information obtained through previous planning sessions.

The preparation sections in this handbook are lengthy and speak to the importance of the process. Allow enough time for preparation, at least several months. It might even be necessary to plan for a year prior to making a major hiring move or budgeting a large sum towards recruitment.

Assessing Your School

A close examination of your school— its public image, academic and co-curricular offerings, faculty, students, parents, alumni/ae and campus facilities—can yield a wealth of information. You need to be on top of what is happening in your school, where its assets and liabilities are, in order to present the public with the reality of what you are about. In addition, the assessment of students, parents and alumni/ae can pro-

vide you with a focus on your clientele, the kind of individuals who have been attracted to your school in the past.

An assessment of your public image, what people think about your school, is a crucial beginning. While administrators or pastors may think they have a handle on their school's image, it is important to ask around, to survey a school's various publics. People can perceive the exact same thing in different ways; this phenomenon makes any dealings with the public a risky business. People make judgments out of their own likes and dislikes, their own life experiences, beliefs and prejudices. Find out how your publics perceive your school. The process will also reveal a lot about those you question.

Listed below are several suggestions for assessing your public image:

- Assemble groups of parents, alumni/ae, faculty and students to discuss their perceptions of the school. Make the number small enough to encourage interaction, between 10-20 people, and meet with each group separately. Parents, for example, might not be forthright if teachers are present, etc. Don't just ask participants whom you know will give favorable responses. Be open to the possibility of hearing negatives. Choose participants with a variety of backgrounds. The students in your group, for example, should come from different neighborhoods, academic strengths and levels of involvement in the school.

- Design a questionnaire to distribute to parents, students and faculty. It can ask for specific responses or can be open ended. Some prepared questionnaires are available through organizations such as National Study of School Evaluation (5201 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA. 22041).

- Question key people in the community, such as, the pastor and associates, deacons, parish staff and parish council members, personnel from neighboring parishes, Division of Schools administrators, city or town officials, community leaders, businessmen and businesswomen, etc. Past parents are a group that could be included in this survey or in the first survey above. You might want to question members of the above groups informally. Use interested parents and alumnae to help with this

task, especially if they have connections to a member of one of the above groups.

Compile the results. If the image of your school is a favorable one, note the specific reasons. These can be of use to you during strategy sessions later on. For this reason, having someone act as secretary during discussion groups is helpful.

Negative aspects in your image require careful thought. You will need to distinguish between your school's reality and its image. If the image assessment points up difficulties that are rooted in fact, these must be acknowledged and steps taken to correct the problems. A willingness to be up front about this, to answer questions honestly, to admit problems are being dealt with, usually garners a favorable public response.

In a recruitment campaign, the public wants the truth about a school; it wants the real separated from any myths or rumors. While the expectation is that you will put your best foot forward, it is unethical to misrepresent your school to the public. Misrepresentation of any kind creates bad public relations, inside and outside of your school. (Further strategies for handling a negative public image can be found in Appendix A.) The bad news is that professionals estimate that it takes from five to ten years to change a negative public image.

A school assessment must include a close critical look at your academic strengths and weaknesses. What does your school do best? Are students getting solid training in religion, reading and writing, math, science and critical thinking skills? Are there any particularly noteworthy or innovative programs, such as community volunteer services, computer science or high school/college placement? Do co-curricular activities develop individual student talents in areas such as leadership, sports, the fine arts and journalism?

Weaknesses in your curriculum must be addressed if only because you will be asked about them. Your best bet is to acknowledge them and do what you can to meet particular curricular needs through creative methods. For example, if an art teacher cannot be afforded, field trips to museums or volunteer workshops by parents or alumni/ae might be considered.

Often, a school assessment will turn up a number of existing programs which can be used for recruitment pur-

poses. Why redirect the energy of administrators and faculty when you might already have scheduled events that can be opened to the public? Sports contests, cultural performances, special liturgies or celebrations, Catholic Schools Week events, bazaars or traditional holiday occasions—all can be tailored for guests. Survey teachers for creative classroom projects and consult parents and alumni/ae organizations about their yearly calendars.

The next step is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your faculty. The number of advanced degrees, professional associations, years of experience and length of time at the school are of interest to potential students and parents. A faculty profile can be extremely helpful in a religous education recruitment effort. The training, life experiences and personal concerns of the Director of Religious Education and staff can be a selling point.

Follow your faculty assessment with one of your student body. A look at your students will tell you what kind of people, academically, socially and culturally, are attracted to your school or religious education program. It will give you the geographic areas, schools and parishes from which you are drawing students. An examination of trends within your student body will reveal any recent shifts in enrollment. Has the non-Catholic percentage increased? Are minorities represented? How does the student body cope with the academic curriculum? Have admissions personnel noted any changes in the abilities of students making application? Are all grades equally enrolled?

Just as your student body can yield information about the direction in which your school is going, so can an analysis of parents. Looking at economic, educational and cultural profiles can better direct your recruitment activities. A decline in enrollment might be caused solely by tuition increases. If your parents cannot afford your school, efforts might be better spent finding ways to increase scholarships or financial aid.

Data from parents should be obtainable from registration documents. If information is sketchy, you might want to design a detailed questionnaire to be completed after students are accepted. Assure parents that their responses are confidential.

Look at alumni/ae for similar trends. What are their socio-economic backgrounds and what kinds of high school,

college and career choices have they made? Do children of alums follow in their parents' footsteps by choosing your school? Alumni/ae are important formal recruiters. If they feel connected to and proud of your institution, they can be an invaluable resource. Find out what your alumni/ae think and begin a file which includes those that might be of help to you in your recruitment effort. If your school already has an alumni/ae office, much of this information should be at hand. Religious education programs should think seriously about identifying key alumni/ae because they are such a valuable resource.

Your final school assessment involves your physical surroundings. Are your buildings inviting to students? Are the grounds well maintained? Are maintenance personnel doing their jobs? Are bulletin boards changed seasonally and is student work in evidence? Is your color scheme a comfortable, cheerful one? Are the desks all in tight rows or is variety evident? Is there an excited buzz of learning discernible through the halls?

Try to look at your buildings and grounds critically, through the eyes of a prospective student or parent. What do you see, and what do you feel? Your building is the external symbol of your school. It represents you in a specific way. Significantly, many schools use a sketch or photo of their buildings as an official logo or advertising symbol. Assess what your building and grounds say about you to those who see it for the first time. Assess how it feels to teach or learn in your building every day.

Assessing Your Resources

No school should plunge into a recruitment effort without taking stock of its resources. Resources, here, refer to three items: the finances needed to support your program, the necessary people to complete tasks and the tools or equipment used in those tasks. It is surprising just how many resources are close at hand. A good copying machine, for example, can produce decent recruitment literature, and the people already connected with a school often do superb recruiting informally. During this assessment, keep your eyes open for the many different people and things which can help in your campaign.

Recruitment can be done on a large budget or on a shoestring. Professional consultants, the hiring of a full- or part-time admissions director, the equipping of an office, the printing of brochures, purchasing advertising space, mailing costs—all take money. The attractive *shoestring* mentioned above contains the hidden cost of "time." Someone must do the many tasks that a recruitment campaign necessitates. If a staff position cannot be afforded, administrators and faculty will have to fill the gap. Professional-looking brochures and ads can be done in-house, but, once again, it takes time.

Schools or programs in some jeopardy because of declining enrollment might do well to take a risk and allocate funds, at least enough for a part-time staff position and an operating budget. Pastors and Boards of Trustees, however, must understand that results cannot be expected overnight. They need to allow time and recognize the efforts of the school community. Some schools conduct a recruitment needs assessment and present the price tag as a first step. The opposite approach is to see just how much a school can afford and tailor the program to fit the budget. In any case, the cost will be in money, time or lost opportunities.

Recruiting effectively takes people. Many of your people-resources are free. Students are the number one, most important resource a school has. They are its clients, its purposes, its product. What they say about their school to friends, their appearance in their uniform or school clothes and the way they behave in public are all observed commentary on your school.

Students need to be told these things. Those who have good verbal skills should be trained to escort visitors through the school or speak as school representatives during recruitment engagements. Appendix B discusses student recruitment assistants in greater detail.

Faculty members are resources in a number of ways. First, they are conduits in the community between the school and its publics. Their informal connections are vitally important. They are more likely to be sought out for the "truth" about a school than its administrators. Faculties are important formal recruiters as well. They can be asked to open their classrooms to or run programs for prospective students. Faculty members who are gifted communicators can be tapped for visits to feeder schools, as stand-ins for administrators at coffees or as spokespersons during public events.

Catholic schools often have a wonderful resource in retired religious and priests who volunteer time to the parish or school. These retirees may have long associations with their schools and may be themselves venerable institutions of the school community. An invitation to recruit or accompany a recruiter is both an acknowledgment of their place in the tradition of a school and an opportunity to take a gung-ho supporter to the public.

The people who staff your school as secretaries, cafeteria workers, classroom aides and maintenance personnel cannot be neglected in a resource assessment. The voice at the end of the telephone can be the first contact a prospective parent or student has with your school. This is true whether the voice belongs to a principal, secretary or DRE. The tone of voice over a telephone can encourage or discourage a caller. In a related example, the maintenance staff should understand that the physical appearance of the school is important to recruitment efforts. Ideally, they should feel pride in the building and know that they are a part of the success of an institution.

The support staff of a school needs to be savvy about the importance of their dealings with the public. They should know when to refer questions to the appropriate person and should have access to printed brochures for distribution. Their smiles, professional demeanor and pride in their work will go a long way towards making your school a popular place.

Parents love to talk about their children's schools. The parent network on schools is a great underground reserve of information that just about everyone taps into. Parents are an invaluable resource formally and informally. They can host groups of prospective parents in their homes, speak at feeder schools, be a part of the program at your Open House, brainstorm ideas, identify potential markets, and, overall, influence other people in favor of their child's school.

Alumni/ae should be considered a resource as well. They can do everything in the above parent listing but from a different perspective. Their current success, as professionals and homemakers, is, in part, a result of your school. Alums have a particular stake in their Alma Mater. They identify with it and can share in its successes. While they are often tapped for development activities—financial contri-

butions, annual campaign chairpeople, phonothon volunteers—alumni/ae can be equally helpful in recruitment. Colleges and independent schools have been using them for years.

Look out for alumni/ae who are parents. Parent/child duos are powerful recruitment combinations. Traditions are hard to beat: your graduates should be a constant, renewable source of students. Keep track of the ages of alum children and don't hesitate to put them on your mailing list when they come of age for your school.

Volunteers can go a long way towards making a recruitment program time and cost effective. Parents, alumni/ae, friends, even students can assist with office tasks such as bulk mailing, typing, collecting and sorting information, taking photographs and making phone calls. A regular, dependable volunteer is worth her or his weight in gold; with more and more women entering the workforce, the traditional volunteer group, mothers, can no longer be expected to fill this need. If certain chores are made into a volunteer "party," with refreshments and a festive atmosphere, you will have better luck in getting people to sign up. Consider holding it on a week night or a Saturday to attract those who work during the day. Students can usually be counted upon to be eager workers; make the atmosphere in which they work a fun one and thank them formally for their contribution to the school.

The final assessment in this triad of resources is your equipment or the tools you will need to bring your school to the public. Brochures, black and white and color photographs, A/V materials, video taping apparatus and computer hard- and soft-ware are all items that you will want to consider.

Prospective parents and students will want something to read about your school. They may call and request that a brochure be mailed to them or expect to be given printed material following a school visit. The printed brochure allows you to send your school into a person's home. Its physical appearance, the color, logo or cover photograph will reinforce whatever message the content carries, and will follow through the advertising or verbal messages previously conveyed. It is almost impossible to engage in a recruitment program without literature about your school.

If you are already using a brochure, carefully assess whether it is up-to-date and attractively presented. Does it

convey the message that you want it to? Is your school's philosophy or mission clearly stated and are curricular activities and co-curricular activities described? Does your brochure give the reader a sense of the atmosphere of your school? Is the text easily accessible to students and parents, or is it targeted for one or the other group?

Professionally printed brochures can be very expensive. Even a single sheet, 3-way fold with text on both sides can run into several hundred dollars. It is possible to design brochures inhouse for considerably less. You will need someone to write the text, a creative design artist to do the layout and affix graphics and headlines, and good hardware— an electric typewriter and, perhaps, a xerox for duplication. A more detailed discussion of types of brochures can be found in the "Presentation" section.

Never hand out dittoed material! Ditto is hard to read and looks unprofessional. It is better to have nothing than a dittoed brochure.

If there is no development or PR office in your school, the admissions office will most likely be asked to coordinate brochures, any media contacts and whatever A/V presentation will be shown to the public. This requires a cache of black and white photographs and color slides. You are lucky if your school has a photo archive. If not, consider starting one. At the 25, 50 and 100 year marks, the opportunity is there for a retrospective. The media may even come to you for old photos.

The easiest way to get professional-looking photographs is to hire a photographer. This is understandably expensive. Your people-resources can help here. Most schools have someone in the wings who can take a good 35 mm picture: a faculty member, parent, student, alumnus/a. Having someone on hand increases the opportunity to get year-round pictures of sports events, holidays and seasonal activities.

Consider whether or not you will need a slide show. If you will be traveling to other schools or talking with groups about your school, the slide show is essential. Pictures elicit an emotional response from a viewer and are a powerful tool for making your school come alive; the only better alternative is an in-person visit during your school day. A slide show requires a projector, screen and lots of extension cord for those locations without handy electrical outlets.

Additional equipment can be considered within a frame-

work of your budget. A slide/tape show which presents a taped accompaniment to a set of automatically advancing slides is helpful if you want direct control over what is said. Such a route might be considered by religious ed programs which have less organized networks to call on for recruitment assistance. Video cassette presentations, although expensive, are gaining in importance in sophisticated markets.

For use within your school, computer software is now available which can simplify the time consuming task of juggling names, addresses and statistical data. Providing an admissions office with a computer is costly, but that needs to be compared with the expense of time and clerical help necessary to complete the same chores. The more successful you are in recruiting, the more paperwork will be generated. Admissions personnel should have sufficient assistance so that they do not get bogged down in paperwork which cuts into the time necessary for planning and carrying out effective strategies.

Further discussion of equipment and the options available for A/V presentations are presented in a later section of this handbook.

Assessing your Audience

All of the time and money you spend will be for naught if you do not understand your audience. The business community calls this process a ***market survey***. Educators term it a ***needs assessment***. Whatever your terminology, it is vital to understand the community which you serve. This assessment will cover your community, parish feeder schools, media outlets and potential target audiences.

Study the demographics of the neighborhood or community in which your school is located. Can the people who live there afford your school? Will they respond to your school's philosophy and the type of education offered? Is there a steady supply of school age children? Is there competition from other Catholic or independent schools? What are the public schools like, and do they offer competition? Are your competitor schools experiencing similar enrollment trends? The diocese and local government, including real estate companies, can supply statistical data. There is nothing wrong

with calling up another school and politely asking for the needed information. If you do this, expect a return phone call some day asking for similar statistics.

Visualizing your geographic area can be useful. Some schools use an area zip code map to highlight where most client families live. It can be helpful to place colored pins on a map, especially if more detailed information is needed. You might want to determine where you have the most success drawing students and what the reasons might be. Are families moving to a particular suburb, development or transportation corridor? If so, you need to know about it and may want to train efforts there.

Transportation is, in itself, a crucial issue. If your school is accessible to public transportation, how many students use it? Do parents prefer to transport their children, and are there carpools? Ask your students how they get to school. If transportation is the only issue keeping a particular geographic area from your school, you might consider asking parents to pay for private bus service. Van pools and mini-buses are also possibilities.

If your school is a parish school, consult your pastor about parish demographics. Have new families been approached about the school? What kind of enrollment changes have been experienced within the parish in the last ten, twenty years? Is tuition a problem for some who have traditionally utilized the school? Does the parish make an effort to provide financial assistance to needy parish families? Do the pastor and associates actively support the school? An obvious question is the number of parishioners versus non-parishioners in your school as well as the ratio of Catholics to non-Catholics.

Catholic schools not connected with a parish also need to survey neighboring parish attitudes and needs. If you are a private high school and your neighboring parish schools end in the 8th grade, they will need you. Assess whether pastors know about your school, and are willing to recommend it. Will they print your announcements in their bulletins? Are there ways to support them (i.e. through advertising in fund raising brochures and patronizing parish events) to show that you are interested in their good will?

A feeder school is one that tends to funnel students into your school as they graduate. Elementary schools which have established kindergartens have found that most of the

children enroll in their own first grade. Certain day care facilities are designed to feed directly into an elementary school. Traditionally, Catholic parochial students automatically *fed* into the adjacent Catholic high school. Some private Catholic high schools still have a network of elementary feeder schools which, by dint of geographic proximity or staffing by the same religious order, regard themselves as connected in some way.

Feeder school relationships must be nurtured. Assess the schools which feed into yours. Have any of the relationships changed, subtly or overtly? Have the administrators seen your school on the inside? Do they understand your philosophy and academic program? Are they openly supportive? What is happening in the classrooms of these schools—are the teachers supportive? Does your school have a strong reputation, one way or the other? What kinds of students are you attracting from the school—are there any patterns? When a student is refused admission, does the school understand why? Is personal contact made with the principal and the parent in such circumstances?

Additionally, your feeder schools can be a litmus test of enrollment trends. If you know the numbers enrolled in each grade, you will be able to plot your available student pool for each year. Keeping good statistics may reveal that while your raw number of applicants from a school might be down, the actual percentage of students applying might be up, indicating that your recruitment strategies were effective. Your diocesan Office of Planning can be helpful in suggesting statistical information worth further consideration.

Assess the media in your area. Most dioceses have a Catholic weekly which can be a tremendous help since Catholic papers actively support their schools. They will print your news releases, announce upcoming events and, possibly, cover important stories. A Catholic Schools Week issue, a Back to School issue and educational supplements may also focus the Catholic public's attention on schools and religious ed programs.

Local and neighborhood papers are the second most important source of friendly news; they are also read more closely than big city dailies. It is worth your while to spend some time with the staff of your local paper in order to so-

licit their support. If you are in or near a city where local papers proliferate, ask around to determine which are the most widely read and worth some attention.

Advertising costs in the diocesan and local papers are usually affordable. Approximately $100 can get you a decent-sized display ad. These papers will usually be happy to support your school because it is good business for them to do so. You are their client by virtue of falling within their geographic boundaries or serving students in their area.

The big dailies are a harder nut to crack. Usually interested in breaking news, they may or may not print your announcements. It is difficult to get them to send a photographer or reporter to your school unless the event is a big one with an appealing *angle*. Advertising rates can be quadruple those of the smaller papers. TV and radio are equally difficult to break into; although, news programs are tending more and more towards *soft* news or feature-type stories with high visual appeal. Public service announcements can be submitted, but you have no control over when or how often they will be read on the air. Purchased radio time is expensive, and TV time, out of sight.

It is the business of the media, however, to make contacts with the public. You will be surprised at how easy it is to phone a city editor, reporter or TV news personality with a story idea. Make personal contacts with the education and religion reporters of your area papers, TV and radio stations. Give them as much lead time as possible when sending in news releases or story ideas. Follow up written communications with a phone call. Make sure that they know who you are as a contact person. The public relations office in your school will handle the above contacts if you have such a staff position.

At this point, you might want to step back and assess a target audience. Will you try to reach everybody at once or will certain efforts be targeted for students or parents? Do feeder schools or parishes deserve special attention? Who makes the important final decision about attending your school,—students or parents? Will you put your money into a poster to appeal to students or a series of newspaper ads aimed at their parents? Look carefully at your audience to determine where your efforts will be directed.

Generating Strategies

Strategies should be generated during idea sessions. The techniques of brainstorming can be used to trigger ideas; this process does not allow for immediate feedback by the facilitator or group but is designed to get as many suggestions as possible on the table for later refining and consideration. Whether ideas are generated through the tightly controlled format of brainstorming or in a looser meeting during which discussion is allowed, every group in your school should be represented, either in one large session or a series of meetings targeting faculty, students, parents, alumni/ae and friends of the school.

You will, of course, need to define the goals of your recruitment program. Sometimes, immediate goals are apparent after the assessment phase of planning. Strategy sessions can then be focused on these. If goals seem to be many or are extensive and need to be spaced over several years, you might prefer to keep strategy sessions open ended. The process of strategizing might suggest an ordering or narrowing of goals. Also, it is to your benefit to gather as many strategies as possible even if they are not immediately utilized. "Strategy" or "idea" files can be perused and updated periodically.

Keep ideas flowing from the people associated with your school. Ask people to slip you ideas whenever they get them. Don't take the attitude, "But who will have the time to do it?" Worry about that later and, perhaps, eventually abandon the idea as unrealistic. If faculty, students and others connected with your school feel a part of the recruitment process, they will invest more of themselves in it.

The Director of Admissions

Part of the preparation phase of your recruitment program must involve a look at your admissions procedures. Who handles admissions and is any recruiting done currently? In some schools and school systems, admissions is formally aligned with the guidance office. The focus of the job, then, is on the handling and interpretation of school records. When recruitment becomes a part of the picture, the job description changes. Superior communication skills become a necessity for an admissions officer. Recruiting is synonymous with

meeting the public—various publics, both inside and outside the school. The person who stands before your prospective students and parents will be a visual representation of your school. How the person speaks, his or her appearance, the professionalism with which the presentation is made—all create an impression about your school.

Can your existing staff handle the demands of a recruitment campaign? If you do not have a director of admissions, consider creating this position. A full or part-time director of admissions can take a tremendous burden from a principal. Such a person can conduct systematic preparation and evaluation, act on formal and informal recruitment strategies, take and make the many phone calls that will result from your campaign and oversee the process of admitting students. A director of admissions can make certain that students are admitted with the same personal sensitivity that is accorded them as prospects. Such a person can centralize the numerous activities involved in recruitment and admissions, two areas which are closely related.

Some schools handle recruitment and admissions through committees. The admissions committee might include a guidance representative, a communicator, one or more of the school's administrators, key faculty members, etc. A recruitment committee can involve a group of faculty members, parents, alumni/ae, even students who are trained to make school visits and effectively communicate your school's philosophy and programs. If you do not have an admissions director, someone must be appointed to coordinate each committee's activities.

The Thank You

Public relations personnel have long recognized the importance of the thank you. In our fast-paced society, thank you's have become a rarity and thus are especially appreciated and remembered by the receiver. Courtesy belongs in a recruitment program because so many people will be contributing to a school's efforts in hundreds of ways. A simple thank you note acknowledges their contribution and their importance to the school.

The group of parents who share an evening with you, the faculty member who works up a list of curricular events, the

student council president who goes along on a recruitment appointment, the parish secretary who provides statistical data, the alumna who jots down a strategy and mails it to you, the local reporter who does a flattering feature on your school, the printing company that produces a particularly effective brochure—all deserve a phone call or a brief note that says, "Thank you." The good will resulting from a thank you note is incalculable. The thank you is also an owed courtesy that is often neglected.

The Written Plan

No matter how exhaustive your assessments or how much information you have in your head, the final step of a recruitment preparation should be a written report or plan that articulates a series of goals and lists the strategies necessary to meet them. A written plan might list each feeder school, parish or geographic area with a list of strengths and weaknesses. It might target parent perceptions, transportation or image. It could contain statistical analyses of enrollment trends in feeder schools and how they will affect you for the next few years.

The written plan can be helpful in obtaining financing for your recruitment program. The more organized and professional a plan, the more attention it will draw from your pastor, board or funding source. It also acknowledges the tremendous effort involved in mounting a professional campaign and can justify time and cost expended by a school.

A written plan can evolve into an ongoing evaluation of your program's efforts. Recruitment does not involve a single period of planning followed by year after year of activities; planning and action continually interact. The further ahead a school can plan, the more effective its program will be. A planning ahead period of five years is often cited as the basis for a stable, ongoing, effective program.

Presenting A Recruitment Program

Your recruitment presentation, the strategies that you select in order to effect the goals of your program, should be viewed within a total public relations effort. The first step is to look at everything that goes out of your school. Review your school logo, your letterhead, address labels, memos, and

flyers sent home to parents. Use this opportunity to examine with a critical eye what your public sees.

What do your logo and letterhead convey? Are they traditional or contemporary? What message is being silently delivered by your school mailings? If you elect to hire a professional agency to consult with you on your image or prepare an advertising campaign, examining your current designs will be their first priority.

The strategies which you have outlined in your written plan should work together to form a single impression of your school. That is why you begin with existing materials described above. Decide what you want to say and how you want to say it. The topics covered in this section outline major strategy areas and list specific choices or activities that you might want to consider. This is by no means a complete listing but a grouping of some that have been effectively used by schools in the past. Make sure that your own strategies are not scattershot but organized towards your stated goals. The topics headlined under *Presentation* are: brochures/literature, A/V presentations, publicity, visits to your school, recruiting at other schools, open house, outreach to feeder schools, parishes and neighborhoods, records and follow up.

Brochures/Literature

You should put into print only what you need to promote your school effectively. Brochures are designed to give information and create an impression about your school. The design should avoid crowding of text and should use only quality photos and graphics.

Cover photos and designs are particularly important—first impressions last. People pictures are generally more effective than places; however, if your school has a beautiful campus or historic building, it too can work for you in a good photo. Photographs of students are especially helpful in giving immediate impressions about your school or program. In all of your photos, content and composition are important. The quality of the face, the physical appearance of the student and the background items or activity in which the student is engaged can create a strong impression about your school. A photo in the library or of a student carrying books, for example, will imply academics while one of a student on a playing

field or musing under a tree will suggest something completely different. A student positioned in front of a bulletin board or poster with a message can provide its own caption or focus.

The design of a brochure can affect its success or failure. Attention needs to be given to layout. The artistic, aesthetic and creative arrangement of text, photos and graphics on the page is essential in order to produce a piece that will be satisfying to the eye. Designs should be carefully planned to avoid crowding. While you want to make good use of your space, give the eye a rest with effectively placed white space. If you and your staff have little experience in design, consult some of the sources listed in the back of this publication or search out materials that will give in some detail the best way to go about this process.

The content of your brochures can vary. Consider some of the following suggestions:

- School philosophy
- Type and size of school
- Location/transporation
- Faculty profile
- Student/teacher ratio
- Admissions policy
- Academic program
- Co-curricular activities
- Special programs or events
- Quotes from pastor, administration, faculty, trustees, students, parents, alums, etc.
- Photographs/graphics
- Features or profiles
- Reprints from other materials

Decide whether you want an informational brochure or one that effects a mood, with student profiles, for instance. Both types can be contained in a longer piece called a viewbook.

This second list gives some typical formats used in recruitment with an indication of the possible target audience and cost:

- Comprehensive viewbook containing a school profile, photos, features, etc. This is most effective when updated annually with companion pieces containing up-to-

date information on tuition, curriculum changes, etc. Target audience: Both students and parents. Cost: Expensive.

- Presentation folder designed to contain brochures on different aspects of the school. The front of the folder can have a brief message or the school's schedule. Target audience: Students, although this is appealing to parents as well. Cost: Expensive.
- A series of stacked, coordinated leaflets or single sheets on quality textured paper on various aspects of the school. These come with a corresponding mini-folder or holder. Target audience: Students and parents. Cost: Expensive.
- A color or black and white poster, possibly containing information flyers or a pad of postcards. The poster itself can feature specific information on the school. Target audience: Students. Cost: Expensive to moderate.
- Companion sets of leaflets, typeset. Target audience: Parents and/or students. Cost: Moderate.
- Companion sets of leaflets, camera ready, printed or xeroxed. Target audience: Parents and/or students. Cost: Moderate to inexpensive.

If you prepare camera-ready originals, there are a number of helpful tools available. Press-type lettering (transferred to your original with a pencil point) in numerous styles and sizes can be purchased at most art supply stores. NCEA puts out a "Catholic Schools Week Kit" with superior graphics, updated annually. Its graphics, along with similar for-sale kits, can enliven an in-house publication. A combination of press-type letters, a good electric typewriter with different type wheels, and attractive graphics can produce a professional looking piece at minimum expense. Again, never rely on ditto. Having access to a reasonably good xerox is a must. If you are duplicating many more than a hundred copies, it could be cheaper to take your original to a printer with an offset press. The cost per piece is sometimes less than xeroxing.

Your brochure should be ready to go in the fall when students and parents begin to consider schools. Brochures are usually readied the previous spring or summer. Printers need considerable lead time depending on the size and scope of your piece. Your brochures should be mailed out

on request; distributed at recruitment appointments and all school and parish events; made available to faculty, students, parents and alumni ae and possibly to real estate, welcome wagon, doctors' and dentists' offices.

A/V Presentations

An audiovisual presentation is more personal than a brochure. Pictures are always more effective at creating a mood, and your narration will be directed at each audience individually. Whether or not you visit other institutions, it is a good idea to have an up-to-date slide show ready. This can be used with visitors and to the delight of your own students and faculty on some special occasions within your school.

Your slide show should feature quality color photos of curricular, co-curricular and social events. Slides should be kept current with seasonal variety evident. Close-ups of faces present a nice contrast to lots of action or classroom shots. Remember that a photo of the school prom may be more interesting to a prospective student than one of the calculus class. It is wise to include photos that will appeal to both students and parents; the narrator can change nuances where necessary. Twenty to forty slides is a good number to shoot for. The resulting show can be flexible enough to fit almost any given amount of time.

Slide/tape presentations add the dimension of sound to your slide show. They allow you to control exactly what is said and can feature statements from representative students and faculty as well as evocative music. Such shows must be professionally prepared and are expensive. An advantage is the slide/tape show's adaptability. It comes with a small viewing screen for use with a small group and a jack that can convert the slides to a carousel projector for full screen viewing.

A new concept in audiovisual shows is the video cassette. You can begin a video cassette library by having someone tape significant school events, sports, and, possibly, interviews. Getting previously taped material edited into a tight 15 minutes requires a professional hand and a large budget. Professional shooting and editing of a short film can cost well over $10,000. The advantage is that you will be ahead of the game when everyone else goes this route in the next decade. Videos are a leading technology of the future.

Publicity

You want the most and best publicity you can receive from the media. It takes time, but a steady stream of well-coordinated news releases and story ideas can pay off by giving your school frequent visibility. You have no control, though, over what the newspapers or TV will run except advertising which you purchase. A rule of thumb is to send only press releases that have genuine interest value and save possible feature story topics for special occasions when they will have the most opportunity of being picked up by the press and used to your best advantage. Learn to distinguish between routine press release information and the story that deserves special attention. Listed below are strategies for receiving the most favorable press:

- The public relations director or designated person should introduce her or himself to appropriate media representatives: editors, education and religion reporters, influential front office and secretarial staff, etc.
- News releases should be written on special stationery and should be sent two to four weeks ahead of time. You might want to follow up with a phone call. Most schools could discover several possibilities for releases each month: student awards, sports activities, open house announcement, science fair, etc.
- Story ideas can be sent in as well. These topics or brief descriptions of events might elicit a visit to your school by a photographer or reporter who might do a photo with caption or feature story. The likelihood of this happening is slim unless there is a tantalizing angle to the story. The visit of a public official to your school, the celebration marking an atypical event, a seasonal activity, an unusual academic program or the special achievements of a student are possibilities. Story ideas should be sent to TV stations and newspapers well in advance and must be followed up with phone calls.
- Plan ahead for special newspaper issues such as Catholic Schools Week or education supplements. On these occasions papers are looking for stories and may even solicit your school for ideas. Seasonal events such as Christmas activities or Memorial Day programs in social studies classes can attract the attention of the media. Remember to plan ahead.

- Public service announcements for radio and TV can be an effective way to get a special event publicized. Local stations should be contacted for information.
- Radio spots can be purchased for ads about your school or program. Target the ad for students or parents and choose your station accordingly. It is necessary to research the station most listened to by your market.
- Newspaper ads in educational supplements and prior to open house are becoming more popular. Study the ads placed by other schools. If good people pictures are handy, they are the most eye-catching. Newspapers will design your ads for you, or you can hire a professional agency. Ads can be delivered camera-ready after you have designed them yourself, or you can discuss with your ad executive a combination of your own ideas and theirs. If copy is delivered early enough, you can get a proof of your ad before it runs.

Visits to your School

Prospective students and parents want to see your school. They will expect you to send them around on a tour and allow them to sit in on classes. You need to be flexible enough to accommodate these requests; you and your faculty will need to adapt to visitors. Actually, the only way a student will really know if your school is right for him or her is by seeing it during the school day. Bringing students and parents into your building presents the reality of your school in the best possible way, and you should encourage the practice.

Make a standard school day invitation a part of your recruitment literature. You might even mail copies of the invitation to feeder schools in case a group would want to visit as a part of an organized field trip. Ask for notice of a day or two so that you can arrange for the tour and prepare teachers. If your visitors want only to walk through the building, no great disruption should be caused. A few seconds at a classroom door should elicit a smile of welcome from the teacher and students.

Frequently, students will want to spend all or part of the day attending classes. Proper advance notification and preparation should ease any tensions faculty members might have

about classroom visits. Be selective in your choice of classroom to open to visitors. Choose experienced faculty members who are in control of their classrooms and are comfortable with the idea. Beginning teachers should not be called upon unless you are sure of their classroom performance. Teachers should not feel that they have to plan special activities for visitors. The usual classroom routine is appropriate; visitors can be made to feel a part of the activity by being oriented to the lesson and encouraged to answer along with everyone else.

Use students as much as possible as tour guides and hosts and hostesses for students spending the day. Using the students will take the pressure off admissions personnel and will give prospective students and parents someone they can talk to easily. Your students will be viewed as role models by the younger students, so it is important that they know how to conduct themselves. (See Appendix B for further comments on student recruiters.)

There are numerous special events that can be tailored for student and adult visitors. A general invitation can be mailed or an ad placed in the Catholic or local paper announcing the event and requesting pre-registration. In that way, you will know how many to expect. If there is a specific feeder school you are interested in, the invitation might be sent to those students only.

Students can be invited to special events for a whole or half day with lunch or refreshments provided. You will need to designate a faculty member and some of your students to coordinate the visit. Teachers and parents might accompany the student group, and you might make the request that chaperones are required; although, this increases the work of the visiting school. You do not want to discourage the visit by placing too many responsibilities at the door of your guests.

Listed below are some events which might lend themselves to such invitations. Remember to devise a system for collecting names, addresses and any other pertinent information during *all* visits to your school by prospective students.

- Catholic Schools Week events
- Performing Arts:
  - Plays
  - Dance

Concerts
Films

- Liturgies
- Religious or holiday celebrations
- Lectures and workshops
- Sports clinics
- Math or writing clinics
- Computer clinics
- Public speaking contests
- Debates
- Spelling, language and math bees
- Latin, Greek or foreign language days
- Art or science fairs
- Student demonstrations or classroom presentations

Recruiting at Other Schools

Colleges and independent schools, particularly boarding schools, have long been used to making formal recruitment visits to other schools. Going "on the road" is a necesary strategy if your feeder schools are many and the competition stiff. Some schools provide an organized forum, such as a day or evening when schools are invited to send a representative, bring A/V shows and share information about themselves. Formats can vary; however, you can expect from ten to forty-five minutes for your presentation. Sometimes, you will be asked to speak for a few minutes in front of the group as a whole. More often, each visiting school is given a classroom and one or two sessions with small groups. Another option is an informal period of about an hour during which students drop by for information.

If a feeder school does not host such an event, you should write or call and ask to talk to the prospective student group. Even though this does not let you connect with parents, its advantage is that you get to make your pitch in front of a whole class whether they are actively interested in your school or not. Once again, you need to be flexible and go when it is convenient for the host school.

Make sure that the person you send on recruitment visits knows how to handle the A/V equipment. Host schools often

can provide screens, but check about their availability ahead of time. Carry extra projector bulbs and a good length of extension cord. Have sufficient brochures and some kind of response card that asks for the names, addresses and school of interested students. Allow enough time for students to give you this information.

Always take along students with you, possibly those who have graduated from the school you are visiting. Students are your most effective ambassadors. After you have shown your slides, conduct a question and answer period and give out your brochures. Allow for some informal time during which you and your students move among the group and talk with students individually. There are always those who cannot bring themselves to ask a question in front of a group of their classmates.

The appearance of your representative, whether the director of admissions, a faculty member or someone else, should be given some thought. Even a daytime appointment calls for professional attire, a cut above what one would wear on a regular work day. Students should wear their uniforms, if your school requires them, and should spiff themselves up for the occasion.

Always thank a school for inviting you and thank students, accompanying parents or alums and faculty for assisting you. Informal thank you notes are always appreciated and may assure you a return visit.

If your band, drama or glee club has an appealing production or performance, you might consider sending it on the road as a traveling show. These events are troublesome to arrange but are usually enthusiastically received at the host school. It is an excellent opportunity to grab some attention for your school. Individual service activities can also be advertised to interested schools. A student or faculty speakers' bureau can offer specific lectures or workshops on a variety of topics. Tutoring services, judges for science fairs and assistance with after school clubs or special activities can also be offered.

Open House

Because of its central importance in any recruitment program, an entire pamphlet could be written on the Open House itself. It is traditional for schools to hold Open House

for prospective students. Since so many schools do it as a matter of course, there are numerous organizational examples and individual approaches. As a general rule the full faculty should be in attendance along with some students, parents and alumni/ae. Open House should showcare your school at its very best: physically spotless, with student work, classrooms, club and sports areas on display.

An Open House takes the same kind of planning as a formal dinner party for several hundred. Visitors will expect you to run an organized program and show yourself to your best advantage. Planning an Open House might include:

- Mailed invitations to everyone on your mailing list.
- Display ads and press releases in the Catholic, local and major papers, along with notices to feeder schools, parish bulletins and, possibly, radio and TV stations' public service announcements.
- Reminder phone calls—student to student—to those on your mailing list.
- Specific instructions to student assistants.
- Possible formats and activities:
  - An informal format with visitors traveling through your school with a map.
  - A formal format with organized tours and student guides.
  - A formal session with speakers, possibly the principal, students, parents and alumni/ae. Consider an A/V presentation.
  - A combination of school tours with a formal speaker session.
  - Registration and the filling out of a brief information card or questionnaire.
  - Hand-outs, brochures or special publications.
  - Departmental or classroom presentations.
  - Sports and club demonstrations or displays.
  - Displays of yearbooks, school newspapers literary magazines.
  - Informal encounters with administration, faculty, students, parents and alumni/ae.
  - Refreshments.
- Follow-up:
  - Letters or brochures to students.
  - Letters or brochures to parents.

- † Letters or postcards to student relatives of alumni/ae or to the alums themselves.
- † Holiday cards to students.
- † Scholarship or financial aid information.
- † Thank you's for attending.
- † Invitations to subsequent student events.

A necessary in-house follow-up is the thank you to everyone who participated. From maintenance workers who doubled efforts in getting the building and grounds in shape to parents and alumni/ae who volunteered their services, personal Thank You's are in order. It is probably unrealistic to think that you can actually hand write each person in the above group a thank you. Consider purchasing thank you cards or designing an attractive flyer that can be xeroxed. A personal signature can be added even on a xeroxed flyer.

Outreach to Feeder Schools, Parents and Parishes

If connections do not already exist, it is important to forge them with feeder schools, neighbors and parishes. You will need to make overtures to people to come to your school, and you will need to devise ways for your faculty, students, parents and alumni/ae to get the word out about your school. Listed below are some strategies which can assist this effort:

- Coffees or cocktails at the homes of parents to which prospective parents are invited.
- Coffees at your school to which current parents are invited and asked to bring a friend.
- Individual or group lunches for feeder school principals, followed by a tour of your school. This can be especially helpful for new principals.
- Individual or group lunches for pastors and associates.
- Cocktails and/or dinner for feeder school faculties or pastors and associates. (Keep these occasions free from proselytizing about your school. Information should be presented in a forthright, professional manner. It is helpful to have faculty present for informal encounters with your guests.)

- Letters written from current students to their former principals, teachers or pastors.
- Informal student or parent contact with former schools or parishes.
- Holiday greeting cards to feeder schools or parishes.
- Information packets or brochures mailed to feeder school principals, key faculty members and pastors.

Records and Follow-up

There are many ways that an initial encounter with a prospective student or parent can be followed up. The list in the Open House section enumerates strategies for following up the Open House, but any of the recommended activities can be used for any group of students. If special brochures are printed for Open House, for example, you might want to mail them to all of the students on your list who did *not* attend. If parent names and addresses are available, they could receive your school bulletin, parent newsletter or development office publication.

Keeping accurate records of the prospective students you encounter will enable you to do all sorts of analysis and follow-up. Devise some system for getting the names, addresses, schools and other pertinent information from those students who visit your school, phone for brochures, etc. These students can be put on your "special events" mailing lists for drama club presentations, concerns or regularly scheduled sports competitions.

A computer is an extraordinary help with data analysis. Transferring names and addresses onto mailing labels and cross checking for duplicates can be an enormous task if done by hand. Computerized an admissions office is a future necessity. Computers can produce graphs, flow charts, percentages, and detailed comparisons of data. It could be helpful to look at some of the information college admissions offices have been able to obtain using computers.

Evaluation

The final process of your recruitment plan is the evaluation of your efforts. Go back to your written plan and the strategies that were added. Which ideas were acted upon? Which were

most successful. The simple task of taking note of all the work your school community or religious education program has completed should be a satisfying activity. Write down the efforts you have made and distribute the report to administrators, faculty, pastor, parish council or board of trustees.

The final evaluation comes when students apply and register. Did effort in a particular feeder school pay off? Is enrollment up in a target neighborhood? Have the desired changes in your student body been effected? Keep in mind that it may take several years for a particular strategy to produce an effect. Printing a brochure and instituting a student visitor program may not affect enrollment the subsequent year. It does, however, plant the seed, and a good recruitment program should eventually meet your goals.

Begin to scrutinize enrollment data each year so that you can look back at trends over a five or ten year period. Keep track of feeder school enrollments so that you can factor in a year when the student pool from which you draw is smaller than usual. Elicit formal and informal feedback from adminisrators, faculty, students, parents and alumni/ae on the progress and effectiveness of particular activities. Don't keep people in the dark about your progress; cushion bad news by emphasizing positive developments.

Conclusion

Student recruitment contains both a danger and a blessing. The danger is that in these unsteady times for education, it is all too easy to use sophisticated recruitment techniques to be selective in the kind of students we recruit. We have the ability to direct our efforts to the intellectually gifted and the financially secure. In the language of our brochures, the statistics we collect and the papers in which we choose to advertise, we can eliminate a large chunk of our population.

The blessing in recruitment is that at its best, it requires a certain attitude, one that welcomes questions and appreciates the questioner. It is an attitude that necessitates throwing open the door and saying, "Come in, experience our school from the inside!" Recruiting allows an institution to do much more than replenish people. The constant state of readiness and the influx of ideas can be a breach of fresh air. For all the fancy talk, it is still the connections among people that provide the essence of education. That is a comforting thought.

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This kit contains graphics and clip art for Catholic Schools Week, but the materials are useful for a variety of purposes.

Appendices

A
Appendix

The Negative Image

It is preferable to deal with a negative public image head on. First, separate truths from rumors and decide what steps you will take to correct problems within the school. Whatever incidents, problems or policies may be implicated, don't be afraid to discuss them when asked. Don't be caught off guard: prepare what you will say ahead of time, don't be defensive and be prepared to say what you are going to do to rectify the situation. If the problem is a major one, it sometimes helps to take the offensive. Bring up the situation and place it within your own context. Needless to say, individuals deserve a certain confidentiality. In the case of students, you might discuss policy rather than people. All negative situations need to be handled with sensitivity and some measure of finesse.

When negative aspects arise out of misperceptions, it is to your advantage to get them out into the open. Laugh at outrageous rumors rather than taking offense; this will diffuse the situation. Be open and put the questioner at ease. Thank her or him for asking about the situation rather than contributing to the problem by perpetuating the rumor. Tell key people at your school, and perhaps some of your responsible students, about the rumor and instruct them on how to respond. Faculty, students and parents should not keep such rumors under wraps; you can only act on those things you know about. Openness in itself is a valuable strategy.

B

Appendix

Student Recruitment Assistants

In many ways students are your most effective recruiters. They can respond from experience when questioned about what it is like to be a student at your school. Students understand the kinds of concerns their peers have and can usually engage prospective students in conversation more easily than adults.

Consider organizing selected students into a group whose specific responsibility is to assist with recruitment activities. The students receive training in public relations techniques: public speaking skills, the importance of their appearance and demeanor, the nuances involved in discussing their school with various publics, etc. They soon develop an attitude of awareness about public relations that allows them to fill any recruitment need at any time. Most students enjoy and appreciate the opportunities to speak in public and develop professional communications skills. The fact that they are invited to join the group adds prestige. You might even want to list it on their permanent records.

There are two pre-requisites for an invitation: a positive, actively supportive attitude about the school and the ability to communicate to others their positive feelings. This does not mean that only highly verbal students should be asked. Your group will benefit from the inclusion of a variety of students, not just the smartest and most accommodating. Some tasks will be behind the scenes; you might even want to ask certain students to be responsible for certain tasks, like thank you notes and letters to the editor.

Since these students are vocal supporters of your school, they must be cautioned against saying anything negative about another school. While the school down the street might be a number one rival, the spirit of collegiality requires that only kind things be said about it while recruiting and in public situations. Students are capable of going overboard in their likes and dislikes and need to be reminded periodically of appropriate behavior in this area. You will find that your older students who have had several years of experience in a recruitment group will be as sophisticated as you are in their understanding of behavior in public. They are particularly good at training new members in the group.

Listed below are a number of activities particularly suited to student recruiters:

- Representing the school at recruitment engagements
- Acting as ushers, hosts or hostesses at school events
- Guiding tours at Open House and for prospective student visitors
- Making and returning selected phone calls
- Providing refreshments and staffing the refreshment table
- Assisting with bulk mailings, business office activities and clerical tasks
- Instructing other students on public relations and recruitment
- Planning and helping coordinate recruitment events
- Evaluating recruitment events

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